

GUIDE TO THE RL1 TURKESTAN FILE

[The RL1 Turkestan (formerly Soviet Central Asia) file contains general information on the people who occupy five present-day Soviet republics: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kirghizia, Tadzhikistan, and Turkmenistan. (There is a more specific file, RQ2, on the Kazak people.) They are located in the southern Soviet Union, stretching from the western shores of the Caspian to Sinkiang, China on the east, and from the Russian SFSR on the north to Iran and Afghanistan on the south, approximately 30-50° north latitude and 52-88° east longitude. It is an area of over 1.5 million square miles occupied by 22.8 million people (1970 census). It is populated mainly by pastoral nomads with pockets of agriculturalists in the oases. The majority of the population speaks Turkic languages (Altaic family) whose names coincide with the names of the republics: Kazakh, Uzbek, Kirghiz and Turkmen. Karakalpak, another Turkic language, is spoken on the western and southern shores of the Aral Sea. Tadzhik however is a Western Iranian language (Indo-European family). It is actually a dialect of Persian, similar to, but not intelligible with Tehrani Persian. It is spoken in the southeastern area along the Afghanistan border. A detailed linguistic map of Soviet Central Asia may be found in 2: Caroe, category 116, pp. 272A-272C.

There are five sources in the file, numbered 1-2, 4-5, and 8. Three are in English, one is translated from the German, and one from the Russian. The most general introduction to the file is 1: von Schwarz which covers a wide range of topics from history, geography and general ethnography to architecture, politics, and justice.

However, the source is pre-Revolutionary and thus dated. 2: Caroe, although it has a more specific goal, contains more current information. It specifically concerns Turkic nationalism and its confrontation with Soviet domination. Background data on geography, history, and demography, as well as good maps and a comprehensive bibliography, are provided. 4: Leix is a study of textiles with background material on their cultural milieu. 5: Pipes concerns the relations of the Turkic Muslims to Soviet religious, demographic, linguistic, and nationality policies. It is based largely on interviews with emigres who left during World War II. 8: Kostenko is a nineteenth century (1868-1880) military statistical survey of Turkestan which contains data on the racial, religious, and regional distribution of the population; birth and mortality rates; comparison of population trends between sedentary and nomadic peoples; and some general ethnographic data. Detailed information is provided on a number of population centers such as Tashkent.

This file contains a variety of information on an area that has been a major crossroads of European and Asian cultures since before recorded history. Its material on the relations between the native peoples and the Soviet Union should be particularly useful for acculturation studies, but the researcher should be mindful of the anti-Soviet bias of those sources. The file was processed between 1955 and 1956.]